

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly

VOLUME XXI No. 2

1991

THE RUTLAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



The stone and brick house of worship, completed by 1898. It burned in 1924. At the right is the parsonage.

RUTLAND METHODIST* EPISCOPAL CHURCH 1924-1926

by Thom Anderson

*"How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place,
O Lord of Hosts, to me"*

In the evening of Thursday, 14 December 1924 Rutland's Strand Theater presented "7 mighty reels of the life, love, rich settings and thrill after thrill"¹ in Rudolf Valentino's "A Sainted Devil".² More vivid and dangerous thrills awaited Rutland's citizenry that night. Long after the Strand's patrons departed, fire engulfed the Rutland Methodist Episcopal Church on West Street. The post midnight blaze drew fire fighters into the freezing temperatures. The church's crowded, urban neighborhood made the fire all the more ominous.

The Methodists had occupied the north side of West Street opposite Evelyn Street since the mid-1850s. The church that burned on that cold winter night in 1924 was the second edifice to be built on the same piece of property. The original building was a clapboard structure built on land donated by W. Y. Ripley, a prominent businessman who owned a marble business in Center Rutland. Another church member, William F. Barnes, also in the marble business, donated the quarry stone. The completed plain but pleasing house of worship measured 66 feet long and 44½ feet wide. It cost \$6,550. By January 1859 a new bell weighing 1530 pounds was installed. That bell is still being used at the present church on Williams Street.

The original church served the congregation for over 40 years. In August 1898 the last service was held and the building was moved to another location to make room for a new church. The stained glass windows had been purchased by the Seventh Day Adventists who renovated the first bank in Rutland at 101 Center Street to serve as their church.

The second building to serve the Methodist congregation was a brick structure trimmed with gray stone. Hidden behind the ornate church were wooden storage sheds and garages. The conflagration seemingly began in these out-buildings.

Questions arose as to the fire's exact origin. One view was popular with church members. Charles W. Spencer, a trustee of the Rutland Methodist Episcopal Church informed the *Rutland Daily Herald*: "The fire started in the third horse shed at the rear of the Church property."⁴ Spencer, a well-to-do furniture store owner and undertaker, rented some shed space from the church.⁵ His concern was both religious and

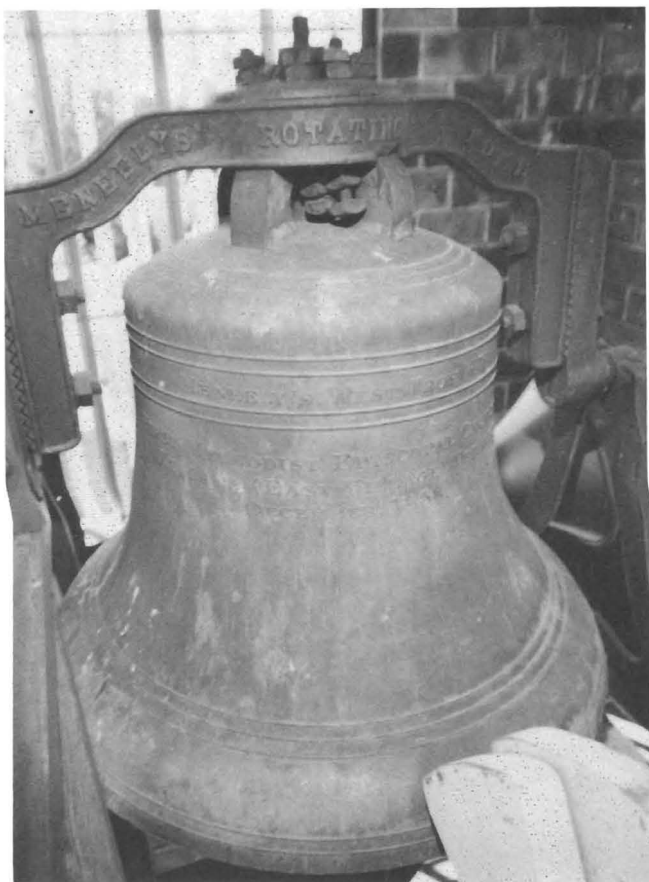
*In 1939 at Kansas City, Missouri, the name of the church body was officially changed to The Methodist Church. In 1968 at Dallas, Texas, The Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren and the Evangelical Association to become The United Methodist Church.



The 1855 church on West Street, a wood structure used some forty years by the congregation

business. He asserted that a church committee, meeting earlier that evening, did not start any fire. Spencer may have implied, what others surely believed, that a passing hobo ignited the blaze.⁶

Fire Chief Alfred H. Koltonski, however, posited an alternate origin. He “found wood of the rear wall of the church building charred on the inside whereas on the the outside of the wall, damage was caused where the flames had licked through the cracks.”⁷ The chief suspected the area above a gas stove located in the Sunday School room. The stove pipe from this stove was very long, creating a potential hazard in the Sunday School and gymnasium. These rooms abutted the back of the church and those wooden sheds. Mayor James C. Dunn and Public Safety Commissioner Fred C. Roberts concurred with Chief Koltonski.⁸



The belfry bell originally installed in the first West Street church. Retrieved after the fire, it presently rings in the steeple of the Williams Street church.



The Reverend George E. Price, minister of the West Street church in 1924 at the time of the disastrous fire

Doubtlessly, the fire began in the back of the church. From there it spread rapidly. The entire rear portion was engulfed. Then the fire ate its way toward the church interior. The enveloping tragedy was discovered about 1:30 a.m. Less than two minutes after the alarm sounded, two fire trucks were on the scene. They deployed three hoses. Moments later a third fire truck arrived from Fire Station #2 located at the corner of Center and Nickwackett Streets. Regardless of these efforts, the roof collapsed five minutes after the fire fighters arrived. The *Rutland Daily Herald* reported the next day: "Every bit of available fire fighting apparatus was called into play" including a ladder truck and all possible hose trucks. A blind attic between the roof and the ceiling of the sanctuary both hid and fed the fire. Hot air explosions caused by the icy water and the heated air under the roof followed the fall of the slate roof and rear chimney. By way of contrast to the fire, water froze everywhere. Firemen, buildings, and equipment alike were coated with a thin layer of treacherous ice.

On this cold, windless evening it was imperative to contain the flames. The church was located in a section of the city where businesses and residential housing merged. Within a few hundred yards of this structure were the Rutland Free Library, Burditt Brothers, C. H. Landon and Company, the Hotel Hamilton, the New York Clothing Company, plus a variety of houses and tenements. East of the church, across a driveway, was the home of Charles H. Barber. Behind the church property and facing Pine Street was the home, shed and barn of George J. McMaster, a claims agent of the Rutland Railroad. At 185 West Street, 10 feet to the west of the church, was the William A. Onion residence. Across West Street was a multi-storied wooden tenement and Koutsonkolis' fruit store at 184 West Street. After desperate efforts to contain the fire, the worst had passed about five o'clock in the morning.

The damage affected more than the church. The previously mentioned C. W. Spencer lost six hundred dollars above his insurance. Victor Koutsonkolis had a truck and a touring car stored on church property. Only the truck was insured. Captain Leo H. Stone, the commander of the Rutland Fire Station #2, averted greater losses by saving three horses stabled behind the church.

One indirect casualty of the fire was Fred Hutchinson, 25, a traveling salesman from Cambridge, Massachusetts. Awakened in the middle of the night by all the noise and confusion, Hutchinson left his room (presumably the Hamilton Hotel) to observe the excitement. On this cold night he went too close to the fire and became wet and chilled. When he appeared at the Rutland Police Station, he related how he was warmed by some "White Mule" offered him by some "Rutland Apaches". These "Apaches" took advantage of the frozen, partially inebriated flatlander. They robbed him.

Rutland responded to the Methodist plight more sympathetically than to Mr. Hutchinson's. The Killington Lodge of the International Order of Odd Fellows, the Congregational, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist, and Universalist Churches made generous offers. The *Rutland Daily Herald* noted on 13 December that the Methodist services would be held at the Mead Community House. This Congregationalist-owned building was located at the southeastern corner of Center and Court Streets. Today it is the city-owned Lawrence Recreation Center. After the first meeting, the Baptist Church on Center Street became the temporary home for Rutland's Methodists. A

committee of Dr. George Price, the Methodist pastor; Dr. G. K. Stratham, the District Superintendent of the Methodist Troy Conference; Mrs. M. S. Gooding, President of the Women's Foreign Mission Society and Charles W. Spencer served as a liaison committee. The arrangement with the Baptists seemed to be helpful to both congregations. There was a ready merging of pastoral duties and youth groups.

Once the immediate problems of locating a site for Sunday worship and other activities were solved, the next step was to plan a new church building. A third Quarterly Conference of the members of the Rutland Methodist Episcopal Church was held in the parlors of the Baptist Church after the fire. District Superintendent Statham presided over the thirty-seven local church members attending, along with Bishop A. W. Leonard. It was decided to have the trustees sell the West Street property; to create a building fund with Alvin M. Graves, a church member and a teller at the Rutland Savings Bank, as a treasurer, and to form a committee to find a suitable location for a new church.

The fire had been a loss but not a total loss. The church was insured for only half of its estimated value of forty thousand dollars. Yet as early as November 1921 the second Quarterly Conference had instructed the trustees to purchase property from the Baxter Estate as the future site of a new church. By 1924 the Methodists owned the Seabury Street property. On 25 November 1924, less than three weeks before the fire, the third Quarterly Conference had authorized the sale of the West Street building and land for thirty-five thousand dollars.

That the church members, or at least the leadership, preferred any other site than the one they occupied had become increasingly apparent. According to Dorothy Baker and Mary Shedd Rudin, both active and aware of the church's impact since the 1920s, were aware of the limitations related to the crowded neighborhood and downtown location. The committee on location of a new church reflected these concerns. In addition to the pastor and district superintendent, the committee included: George C. Thrall, a life-long Methodist, who shortly was to die in February 1925; Frank R. Stevens who worked in the engineering department of the Rutland Railroad and was the son of a Methodist preacher; Dr. Schuyler W. Hammond, a general practitioner who concentrated on obstetrics; J. Gardner Menut, the general manager of the Rutland Railroad Light and Power Company and the Vermont Hydroelectric Company and Charles W. Spencer.

They worked quickly and efficiently. They considered six potential sites. After evaluating each, they made a recommendation to the fourth Quarterly Conference of February 1925. They noted the West Street property included the ruins of the church and the two dilapidated houses. They hoped it could be sold for eighteen thousand dollars. The other property already owned by the church was the Seabury property on the corner of Church Street. The drawbacks to this vacant lot included the need to install water, sewer, and sidewalk facilities. In addition, it was viewed as a "considerable distance from the center of the town".

The four other sites were not owned by the church. The Gale property on West Street between Lincoln and Elm Streets was dismissed as too steep and with a water problem. Another cost would be the clearance from the property of an existing house and barn. There was the Bates property on Grove Street extending west to Summer

Street. Here, too, the land was too steep, as well as the lot being too narrow. The probable price was ten thousand dollars. Directly across from the Bates property was the Foley property at the corner of Williams and Grove Streets. The problems here included a small lot at a great cost (approximately forty thousand dollars), plus the removal of existing buildings.

The sixth property seemed destined for selection. At the northwest corner of Williams Street and Chestnut Avenue, directly at the head of Cottage Street, was a 165-foot by 125-foot level piece of ground with two houses on it. Costs here would be \$18,250 including the cost of removal for the two houses. After visiting the various sites, the committee members made it known that they definitely preferred this "head of Cottage Street" location. The site selection committee conducted an informal survey. Their findings confirmed the corner of Williams and Chestnut Streets as the approximate geographic center of the church's membership. This committee envisioned a sanctuary "facing Williams Street which would show up very nicely looking up Cottage Street from West Street". After much discussion, the committee believed their choice would appeal "to the large majority . . . making it possible to have a united church". Cottage Street in the 1920s was a quiet, prosperous neighborhood. Gracious homes on a tree-lined avenue bespoke respectability, an apt setting for the new church statement about itself.

The Quarterly Conference Committee on church affairs also decided upon the properties at the head of Cottage Street. They, too, preferred to abandon the downtown site and to bypass land owned on Seabury Street. They chose the location because it was central for the Methodists but eschewed the Seabury property three blocks away as too far from the center of town. They chose the Williams Street property with an extra 66 feet on Chestnut Avenue adding over \$28,000 before any construction could begin.

The Quarterly Conference Committee then examined its finances. Alvin Graves, treasurer for the building committee, reported income over \$26,000 realized from insurance on the West Street church, a loan from the Methodist Episcopal Home Mission Board, early subscriptions from church members, and an auction held at the burned-out church. A small mortgage was paid off, leaving \$25,000 for the new church.

A building committee was then selected to investigate plans and financing for a new church. The site selection committee without J. Gardner Menut and Brother Thrall, who recently died, became the core of this new group. To fill out the committee, North Main Street contractor Harley W. Perkins, Howe Scale employee William Fanning, Choir Director M. Scott Gooding and Mrs. Alvin Graves and Mrs. Mark Porter (representing the Ladies Aid and King's Daughters) were later added.

Two days after the Quarterly Conference, the building committee moved a suggestion from District Superintendent Statham that Reverend Price become chairman. The Pastor demurred. Instead, he nominated Spencer. The motion carried. Frank Stevens eventually became secretary.

Meeting followed meeting through March, April, and May. It was necessary to determine what facilities the new structure would house. It was necessary to find an



Charles W. Spencer, chairman of the building committee for the edifice to be constructed on the corner of Williams and Chestnut Streets

architect, plus a contractor, to build the new church. It was necessary to finance the undertaking. These were busy times for the committee members. Undertaker Spencer's West Street Chapel became the group's permanent meeting place.

The church's needs were assessed. One meeting concerned plans for the Sunday School. From Beginner's Department to Adult classes, the figure was in excess of 600 enrolled. Average attendance was less than 300. On 23 March Mr. Carroll Rich, sexton; Miss Mary Shedd, president of the Epworth League and Scouting Director Berry made pleas in support of a swimming pool. The three presenters were seriously questioned about the pool's utility for the entire Methodist community, particularly the elderly members. All later detailed proposals, however, included these items. The pool's cost was seen as optional if it could be financed.

The first of several architects and church designers appeared on 27 February 1925. J. Russell White of Albany, New York, and his church architect, G. R. Comstock, had experience in building over 200 churches. The most important was erected in New Haven, Connecticut, fifteen years earlier. Architects from Boston, New York, and Rutland entered the competition. George W. Chickering from Boston met with the committee on March 4th, as did Harry E. Warren from New York City. Mr. Stuart of Woodbury and Stuart, a Boston firm, escorted building committee members to his best churches. Arthur H. Smith of Rutland showed his designs of the Clement Chapel in Shrewsbury and a Middlebury church in the evening of 13 March. By 4 April twelve other architectural firms had inquired, as well as a late entry from Allen and Collins of Boston.

A primary concern was the appearance of the church. The original West Street church had been wooden. The second one was of brick. Rutland County is noted for its marble. A delegation led by Spencer and Dr. Price visited Vermont Marble Company officials on 6 March. That afternoon the group saw Mr. Herbert Bixler, head of the Estimating Department. Privately, Mr. Spencer and Mr. Frank C. Partridge, president of the Vermont Marble Company, conferred.

When the two major architects presented their plans, both gave the option of marble or granite. One saw granite as costing \$2,500 more than comparable marble. The other's figures reflected granite as cheaper by ten cents per ton. The committee rejected marble.

On Monday, 9 March, Dr. Hammond and the ubiquitous Mr. Spencer traveled to Boston to view the churches designed and/or constructed by Harry Warren, Woodbury and Stuart, and George Chickering. Later in the week, the train carried the travelers to Albany to confer with White and Comstock. It was on this trip that Weymouth granite made a strong impression.

The East Somerville, Massachusetts, church was of particular interest. Being a Weymouth granite structure, this large building was designed by Woodbury and Stuart with Mr. Warren brought in later for minor consultation. On 18 March Mr. Stuart displayed plans and sketches for the proposed Williams Street property. He was favorably received and encouraged to submit more detailed plans. On 3 April an English Gothic style sanctuary facing Cottage Street was presented. There was to be a sanctuary with seating for 850 and a chapel with room for 450. Under the sanc-

tuary was to be a banquet hall with a capacity of 500 and a gymnasium below the chapel. Cost was estimated at \$130,000 for the Weymouth granite building. If the committee decided to build on the unit plan, a section at a time, rather than all at once, an additional \$1,000 would be needed. If the first unit to be built was the gymnasium, Sunday School, chapel (facing Chestnut Avenue), ladies parlor and banquet hall, the cost would be \$60,000. If everything were built, complete with the furnishings, \$172,000 would be needed.

Harry Warren had previously presented detailed plans to the building committee. On 1 April his sketches revealed a church for 700 people with a 130-person side chapel. A Sunday School for 600 and a gymnasium were included. The total cost here was \$165,000. The unit plan was again more expensive. Warren estimated marble at \$2,500 cheaper than granite.

On 4 April 1925 the building committee met to hammer out its recommendation. In effect, the decision concerning architects and plans was made here. The competitors were summarily winnowed down. Unanimous rejections awaited the designs of Arthur H. Smith, George Chickering, and White and Comstock. Allen and Collins were deemed too late for consideration. The other twelve inquiries never saw the light of day, as Chairman Spencer did not bring them before the group. During these discussions the feasibility of a pool receded into some indefinite future.

A preliminary vote revealed seven in favor of Woodbury and Stuart with only two for Mr. Warren. More discussion followed with Dr. Hammond and Charles Spencer affirming the former's qualities. Choir Director Gooding and Committee Secretary Stevens preferred the New York City architect. Interestingly, Dr. Hammond, a Cottage Street resident, saw no major differences with one exception — the Weymouth granite. Dr. Hammond believed his candidates offered more building experience with this type of building material and a cheaper total price. M. Scott Gooding rejoined the debate suggesting that, if both architects submitted the same plan, any cost difference would be obviated. Slicing to the heart of the question, he urged the committee to determine what it wanted.

Chairman Spencer offered the inside story on the West Somerville, Massachusetts, structure. He credited Woodbury and Stuart with the seamed-faced granite building. He believed Mr. Stuart who down-played Warren's role in that church's construction as "nothing that amounts to anything". Mr. Stevens moved and Mr. Gooding seconded that Woodbury and Stuart be selected. It carried unanimously.

At the 1 April gathering, Dr. Hammond inquired of Dr. Price the seating needs of the church over the next fifty years. His reply: Seating for "600 people would be plenty". Despite this recognition of its future needs, the Building Committee eliminated all but Woodbury and Stuart who offered a building with a third larger capacity. Later, the fourth Quarterly Conference unanimously affirmed the Boston company's design. Many must have agreed with the furniture store owner, Charles W. Spencer, when he later wrote of "building for the future".

After the Quarterly Conference of 2 May 1925 concurred in the selection, the next problem was finances. The new church would cost around \$198,000. That was \$165,000 more than what was available. After some discussion, the Quarterly Con-



Architect's sketch of the new church as it was originally planned in 1925

ference gave the Building Committee *carte blanche* on financial matters from fund-raising to selling church property.

A Mr. Thayer, representing a New York firm, arrived in late May to present a funding campaign proposal to the Building Committee. Using the committee as a core group, a campaign committee was created with Dr. Price as chair. Mr. Spencer was elected vice chairman. An initial step was taken when the vice chairman distributed church membership lists to the committee to determine the amount each could give over 130 weeks. The remainder would be gathered outside the church. Before the entire project was complete, three campaigns were launched. Spencer reported on September 1925 that church members subscribed \$17,957, and non-members \$26,898. In the end more funds were subscribed outside the church than inside.

Even former Rutland Methodists were solicited. For example, Spencer wrote to Halsey E. Poronto of Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Poronto and his wife, the daughter of Thomas and Martha Kershaw, had lived in Rutland in their younger days. In 1925 Mr. Poronto was a vice president of the Union Stock Yard and Transit Company. Spencer's letter noted how "the Lord has been very good to us both, especially you". The Rutlander "thought that (Mr. Poronto) might want to make a good big liberal donation" to the building fund. He suggested \$15,000 for furnishings of the chapel or \$10,000 for the gymnasium. Spencer asserted "We cannot build the place we should have and equip it as it ought to be for less than \$200,000." Poronto responded, but not as generously as suggested. He pledged one thousand dollars on behalf of the memory of his parents and his wife's parents.

Spencer was grateful for the pledge. Answering Poronto's note, he claimed "God's work is going on." The membership was "all crying to build something that would be a credit to the city". Moving on, he avowed "not to run into debt one dollar above the total amount" pledged.

Other sources of money included loans from the Methodist Episcopal Board of the Home Missions and Church Extension, sale of various church-owned real estate, and memorial donations for the various sections of the "house by the side of the road—at the head of Cottage Street".

As the fund-raising efforts went into high gear, requests for construction bids were made. There was a stated preference for local contractors but a sense that they might not be able to handle the job at reasonable cost.

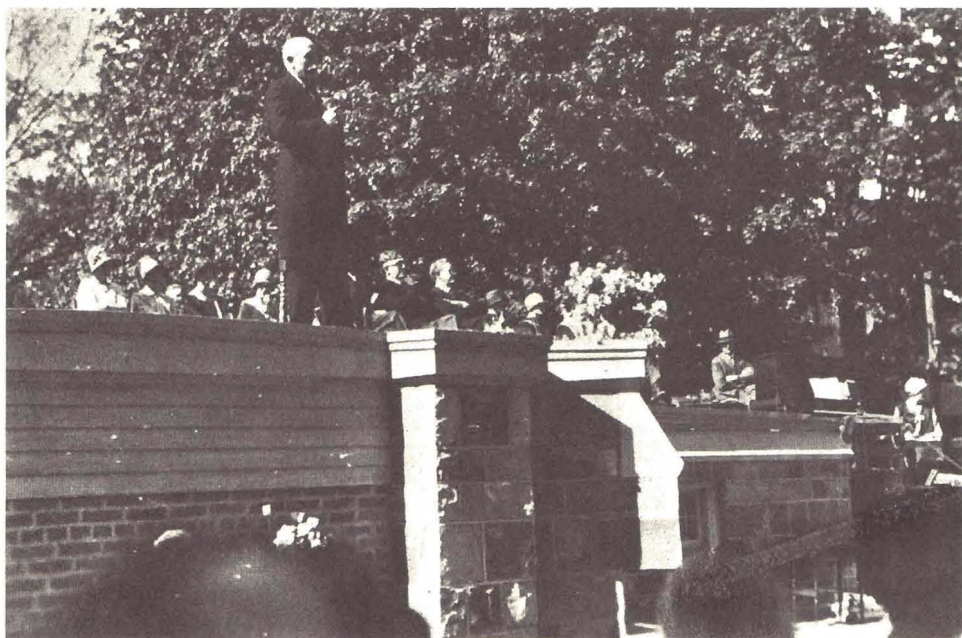
The evening of 14 August was a busy one at Spencer's store. The Building Committee with Mr. Stuart present opened the bids on the new church. C. G. Noyes submitted the lowest church building bid of \$148,516 complete. Standard Steam and Supply Company was the lowest bidder on the heating and ventilating system at \$10,110. Adams and Noe had the lowest parsonage heating bid at \$1,046. "As low bids were higher than Mr. Stuart felt the church could be built for, efforts were made to get him to take over construction."

On 27 August a joint meeting of the trustees and the Building Committee again reviewed all bids. Afterwards, Charles Spencer informed the gathering of his talks with Woodbury and Stuart. They will build the church. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously carried to reject all bids and instruct the Boston firm to proceed to build the chapel, gymnasium, and banquet hall "at once". On 1 September the same group heard Mr. Stuart explain his contract to act as construction engineers. After some financial discourse, considerable discussion revolved around seam-face Weymouth granite. Of the twelve members present, only one voted against the granite. The group created a committee of three with power to sign contracts, pay bills and handle emergency matters. Dr. Hammond, Frank Stevens, and Charles Spencer were nominated. One small, final concern was the sale to Mr. Spencer of the West Street church furnace and enough brick for a chimney.

The work proceeded apace. Occasional Building Committee meetings were held to discuss potential changes and alterations within the building plans, to decide cost matters and future canvassing efforts, and to deal with insurance matters. The old church was torn down. The brick and bell were salvaged as were some stained glass windows.

On a sunny Sunday afternoon in early June 1926 Dr. Price presided at the laying of the cornerstone. Reverend Henry L. Wriston of Boston University was invited to deliver the main address. Mr. Gooding's Methodist Choir sang "The Lord of Hosts is with Us". The Rutland Baptist Male Choir's participation spoke of the close association of these two Protestant denominations during the intervening months that followed the disastrous fire on West Street.

Finally, the consecration festivities commenced on Sunday, 28 November. The Reverend R. C. Thompson, principal of the Troy Conference Academy (presently Green Mountain College), spoke at public worship that evening. Bishop A. W. Leonard



Consecration in 1926 of the first constructed units of the new church. The dedication, after burning the mortgage, was celebrated in October 1946.

delivered the sermon on the morning of 5 December. That same consecration service heard Building Committee Chair Charles W. Spencer deliver a business statement. Sunday evening, with the Congregational Church Quartet singing the anthem, the new Methodist District Superintendent, Leigh Diefendorf, gave the main address.

At mid-week, the Ladies Aid Society held a bazaar. The young ladies of the Philalthea class acted two playlets. Friday night, 10 December, Mr. Spencer presided as toastmaster at a banquet of Vermont turkey. Many local and visiting clergy attended and responded.

Exactly two years after the fire gutted the brick church on West Street, a new building of rust-tinged granite, housing a chapel, gymnasium and banquet hall was dedicated. Lacking sufficient funds, the sanctuary was postponed. Ironically, the view up Cottage Street from West Street revealed no English Gothic style, seamed-face granite edifice. Instead the long windowless south wall of the chapel sat behind a below-ground level banquet hall that was tarred over awaiting the sanctuary.

The real up-to-date modern church was not yet finished. The church membership owed money on the units already built. No more money was forthcoming to expand and complete the original design. Throughout the previous two years, Charles W. Spencer had endeavored mightily to meet his vision of a church of which he could be proud. The church members had acquiesced. Indeed, they had pressured for more—an eight to ten thousand dollar swimming pool, kitchenette off the Ladies Parlor, and a new dishwasher, to name but a few. Despite the grandiose designs

adopted, emphasis was placed upon the utilitarian aspects of a physical plant. Gymnasium, banquet hall, Sunday School, ladies parlor and chapel served the practical life of the Rutland Methodist community. Only the sanctuary in 1926 remained a dream.

END NOTES

¹*Rutland Daily Herald*, 11 December 1924.

²*Ibid.*, 11 and 12 December 1924. These two articles form the basis for the account of the fire. All quotes are drawn from these sources unless otherwise noted.

³Robert Edward West (ed.), *Rutland in Retrospect* (Rutland, VT: Rutland Historical Society and Academy Books, 1978), p. 44.

⁴*Rutland, West Rutland, and Proctor Directory for the year beginning May 1925* (Schenectady, NY: H. A. Manning Co., 1925), p. 44.

⁵Interview with Mary Shedd Rudin, Rutland, Vt., 28 November 1980.

⁶*Rutland Daily Herald*, 11 and 12 December 1924.

⁷*Ibid.*, Rudin.

⁸*Rutland Daily Herald*, 12 December 1924.

⁹Etta S. Adams, *The History of the First Methodist Episcopal Church* (Rutland, VT: privately typed—only copy in possession of the United Methodist Church of Rutland, Vt.), p. 146.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 147; *Directory*, passim.

¹⁵Adams, pp. 148-149 covers this section.

¹⁶Rudin.

¹⁷Adams, p. 152.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 155; *Directory*, passim.

¹⁹*Minutes of Building Committee meetings* in folder marked "Building Plans 1925" held by United Methodist Church of Rutland, Vt., 27 February 1925 entry.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 15 March 1925.

²¹*Ibid.*, 23 March 1925.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, 6 March 1925.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In 1970 Thom Anderson married Mary Gay Knapp in the Rutland United Methodist Church. From 1974 to 1987, Thom taught at Rutland High School including a Local History course. This paper stems from a seminar led by Dr. Holman Jordan at Castleton State College. In 1987, Thom signed on with the P. K. Yonge Lab School of the University of Florida.

CREDITS

Pictures

Thomas McDevitt: West Street church that burned in 1924

Bronson Spencer: grandfather Charles W. Spencer

Mrs. Homer Ashland: burning of the mortgage, 1978

All other pictures, courtesy of the Rutland Methodist Church archives and Warren W. Dexter

Supplement

Rev. William J. Barney (pastor of the Rutland United Methodist Church, June 1978-_____) *The Sanctuary*

THE SANCTUARY

By Rev. William J. Barney

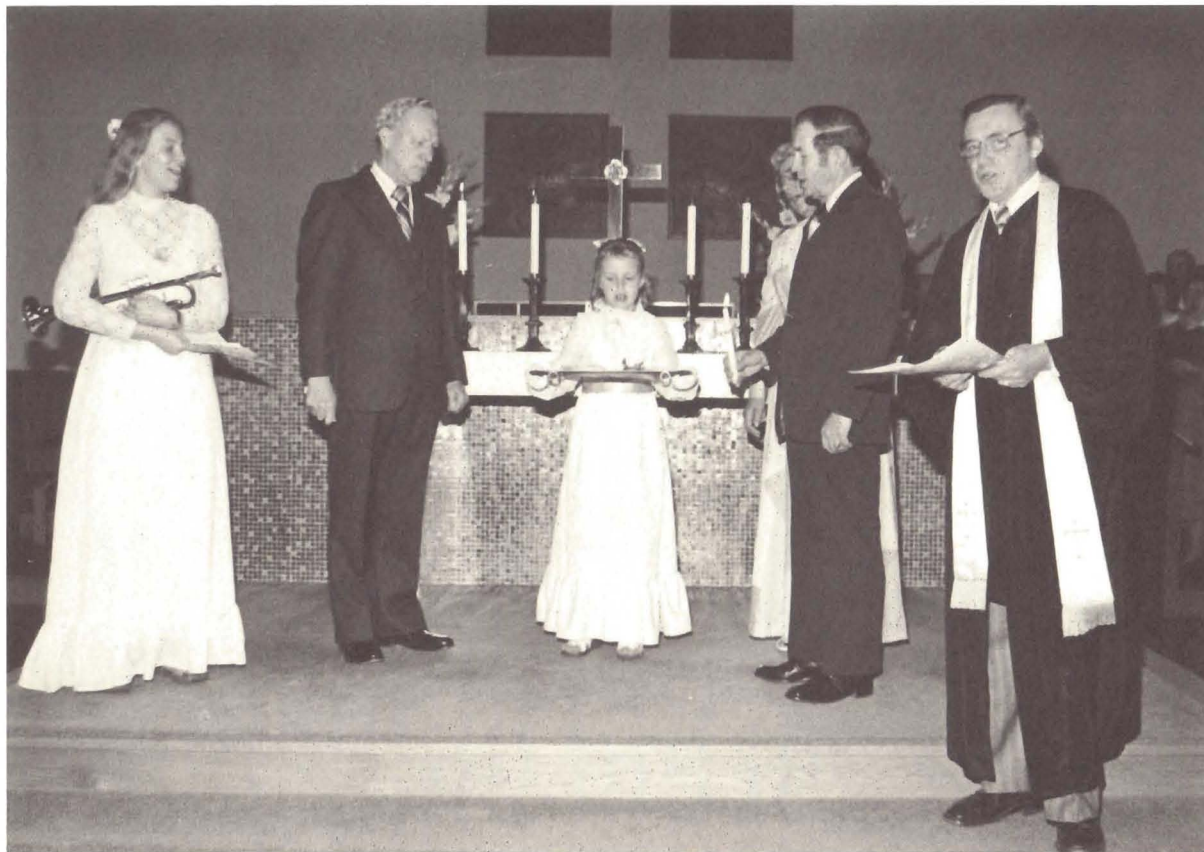
The completion of the new sanctuary would remain a dream much longer than anyone ever imagined. By the late '20s housing for the pastor's family became an issue as the parsonage next to the church on Chestnut Avenue proved too small for the family of the appointed pastor. Although it caused somewhat of a "split" in the church membership—between those who wanted to finish the sanctuary and those who desired a new parsonage—it was decided in 1930 to build a new parsonage on the other side of the church at 73 Williams Street. It remains in use for that purpose today.

No other major construction took place through the 1930s and '40s. In fact the burning of the mortgage never took place until October 1946 when Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam visited and preached the sermon.

Major renovations to the Thrall Chapel took place in the early 1950s under the leadership of Rev. G. Lewis Porter. Citing impracticality and Christian stewardship, Rev. Porter was content to let the dream of a new sanctuary remain just that, a dream. He convinced the church to completely renovate the chapel altar area in 1951 and add permanent pews in 1953.

With the arrival of Rev. Dale D. Russell in 1958, those with "the dream" regained control and plans were made for the building of the sanctuary and more major renovations. The gym was remodeled into four classrooms and the stage was removed from the banquet hall. Construction on the new sanctuary, in a style totally different from the original concept, was begun. It was built of light brick rather than the sandstone of the 1925 construction which had become cost prohibitive. The new church was consecrated on September 10, 1961. It was not dedicated until May 7, 1978 with the burning of the mortgage.

In 1985, at the urging of the current pastor, William J. Barney, the church once again moved services back to the Thrall Chapel—again newly renovated for energy conservation during the coldest six months of the year. This meant a saving of over 9,000 gallons of fuel per year. The beautiful "dream" sanctuary had always proved too large and impossible to insulate. In 1990 the entire kitchen, banquet hall and classrooms were demolished, reconstructed and redecorated; continuing the tradition of keeping the church facilities up-to-date and useful for the church membership and the Rutland community, all to the glory of God.



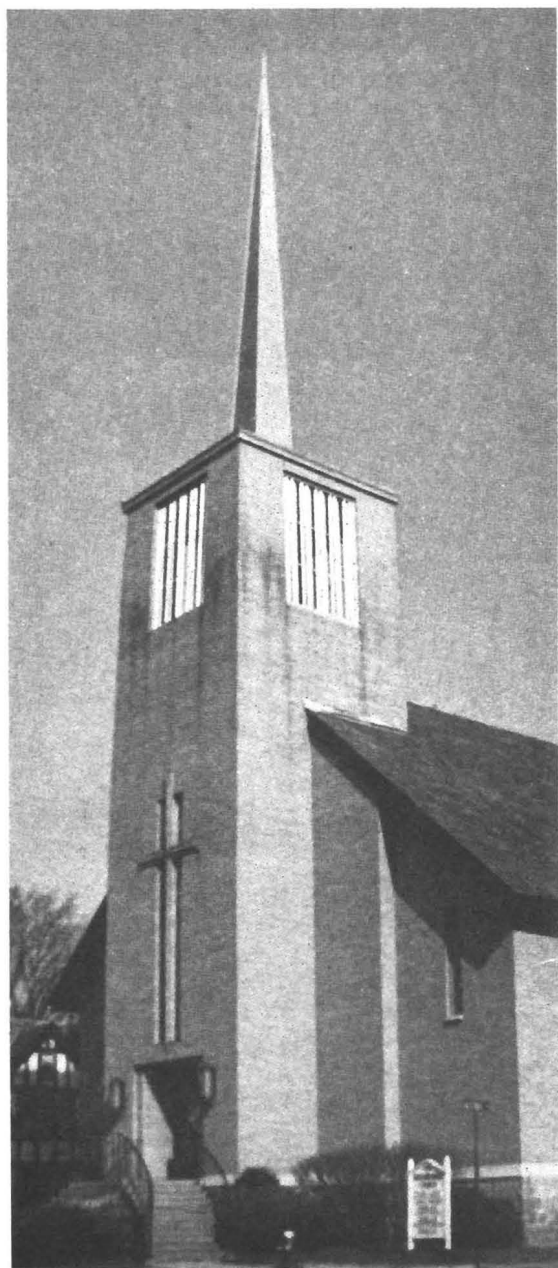
The burning of the mortgage (6 May 1978). Left to right: Julie Tatro, Kenneth White, Stacey Olsen, William Tarbell, and the Reverend Roland Kelly, parish minister



The congregation celebrates the dedication of the Sanctuary, 6 May 1978.



The Reverend Dale D. Russell, minister of the United Methodist Church when the new church on Williams Street was consecrated in 1961



The United Methodist Church at the corner of Williams and Chestnut Streets as it appears today. Consecrated in 1961, it was dedicated in 1978.

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 6473, RUTLAND, VERMONT 05702
(802) 773-3417

Membership in the Society is open to all upon payment of appropriate dues. (See dues schedule below.) With membership, for its period, goes a subscription to the Quarterly, any newsletters, a copy of the Annual Report, entitlement to vote at business meetings, and benefits accruing from support of the Society's Museum, exhibits, programs, collections and library. The year through which membership is paid and the category are noted on all address labels.

Please send any address change on Postal Service Form 3576 (a postcard freely available at your local post office).

Annual Meeting is held at 7:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of October.

Annual dues categories are:	Sustaining—\$125.00	Contributing—\$20.00
	Sponsoring—\$50.00	Regular—\$10.00
	Business—\$125.00	Senior Citizens
	Students	(62 & up)—\$8.00
	(18 & under)—\$8.00	

Special one-payment categories are: Lifetime—\$200.00 Memorial Gift—\$200.00
Advance payment for 2 or 3 years is welcome, helping to reduce costs.

Please make checks payable to: Rutland Historical Society

And send to: Box 6473

Rutland, VT 05702

Manuscripts are invited: address correspondence to the Managing Editor.

Editor: Michael L. Austin

Managing Editor: Jean C. Ross

Copyright © 1991 The Rutland Historical Society, Inc.

ISSN 0748-2493

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 6473

Rutland, Vermont 05702

**ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED**

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Rutland, Vermont
Permit No. 12



The number or letter on the address label indicates your dues status:

91 current Life membership